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Written statement* submitted by Amuta for NGO Responsibility, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Amuta for NGO Responsibility Statement on European Human Rights Funding for Arab-Israeli Peace

The European Union, its member states, Norway, and Switzerland provide funding to hundreds of NGOs through frameworks focusing on human rights and related principles, as a central dimension of "soft power" (or "normative power") projection. In many cases, the reports and lobbying efforts of these NGOs are central to the process of policy formation within these governments, forming a closed circle in which particular analyses and perceptions are reinforced, while competing views are excluded.

This NGO funding and policy cycle is particularly significant in the case of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in which tens of political advocacy NGOs are allocated European government budgets (both directly though state ministries and indirectly via general large state grants to church-based humanitarian aid groups). However, there is no systematic evaluation of the impacts of these policies, and no evidence that they have contributed to improved human rights records or a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Instead, in many instances, the close relationships between the European governments and the political advocacy NGOs claiming to promote human rights agendas are associated with partisan agendas that are counter-productive to both human rights and efforts to promote peace in the region.

One of the EU's major financial assistance programs is the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). With an approximate annual budget of €160 million, program objectives are to provide "support for the promotion of democracy and human rights in non-EU countries." EIDHR funding in 2007-2010 (most recent available comprehensive data) reveals that the EU allocated highly disproportionate funding for NGO projects in Israel and the Palestinian Authority. For this period, NGOs received over €11 million –more than any other target country. Neither EIDHR nor the EU has presented any justification for this large budget. Forty-four individual projects in Israel and the Palestinian Authority were funded in this framework, which ranks fifth highest in terms of the number of projects, and received a majority (57%) of EIDHR funding directed at the Middle East. In contrast, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the UAE **received no funding** for EIDHR projects directed at specific countries.
The decision making and evaluation processes by which EIDHR provides this large-scale funding for political advocacy NGOs is entirely hidden from public view, in violation of basic transparency requirements for democratic governance. The lack of recent data and evaluations regarding a central EU funding mechanism is inconsistent with the requirements for good governance and democratic oversight.
Analysis of the EIDHR projects demonstrates a fundamental distortion in the EU's perception of Israel, which is almost exclusively restricted to relations with Palestinians and with the Israeli-Arab minority. Important issues related to democracy and human rights in the complex and unique Israeli context are entirely missing from this agenda. Many projects involved organizations with a strong bias against Israel, as demonstrated by their political activities and agendas. Their campaigns are part of a wider political strategy that exploits human rights language and specifically seeks "the complete international isolation of Israel … which means the imposition of mandatory and comprehensive sanctions and embargoes, the full cessation of all links (diplomatic, economic, social, aid, military cooperation and training) between all states and Israel," as stated in the Final Declaration of the discredited NGO Forum of the 2001 Durban conference. A significant number of these NGOs actively promote BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) and campaign against a two-state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict in direct opposition to European policy in the region.

Furthermore, the basic rights of Israelis, including the basic right to life without the threat of terrorism, are systematically ignored and omitted in this framework.

Examples:

- In 2011, EIDHR provided an Israeli NGO, the "Coalition of Women for Peace," €247,668 under a project titled: "Empowering Women, Building Peace." Yet, CWP is a leader in the campaigns to demonize Israel, including boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) via the "Who Profits" project that it initiated, and sponsoring "Nakba Day" activities. CWP officials have participated in events in which they carried flags of the PFLP terrorist organization. EC policy opposes BDS and other forms of demonization as counter-productive to peace efforts. The decision to provide funding to an NGO that directly contradicts this policy is therefore inexplicable.

- In 2010, the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) was awarded an EIDHR grant of €169,661. ICAHD presents a one-sided perspective on the conflict, including entirely unsubstantiated accusations of "**ethnic cleansing**," "**genocide**," "collective punishment," and "apartheid." This rhetoric reflects a bias that is entirely inconsistent with the goals stated by EIDHR and the EU. ICAHD head Jeff Halper claims that a bi-national state is the only remaining option resulting from Israel's "futile attempt to impose an apartheid regime" and calls for a dismantling of the Palestinian Authority.
- In 2009, Adalah (and two other unnamed NGOs) received €627,526 for "combating and preventing torture and ill-treatment of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli prisons and Palestinian civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory." Adalah, repeatedly attempts to portray Israel as anti-democratic and racist, including frequent events in the UN and EU frameworks. In the wake of the Goldstone Report, Adalah also urged governments to "re-evaluate their relationship with Israel." In collaboration with Al Haq, Adalah also published, "re-assessment of Israel's practices in the occupied Palestinian territories under international law," accusing Israel of international crimes and calling for an International Court of Justice advisory opinion declaring Israel to be a "racist, apartheid colonial state.".

In parallel to the EU frameworks, there are many examples of individual country funding in Western Europe for NGOs that promote anti-Israel and anti-peace agendas under the banner of human rights. The Netherlands is a prominent example, and there are at least 17 NGOs receiving Dutch support that actively partake in these campaigns, including Addameer, Defense for Children International – Palestine Section, and Miftah – all of which endorsed the 2005 Palestinian Call for anti-Israel boycotts. These organizations receive Dutch support through numerous frameworks. The most direct is through the NGO Development Center (NDC) in Ramallah, which manages funds on behalf of the Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden and Denmark. NDC grant recipients include Al Haq and Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), which are very active in BDS activities, anti-Israel UN initiatives, and in attempts to exploit European and international courts, including the ICC, to initiate "war crimes" indictments against Israeli officials. All of these organizations reject a negotiated two-state (Jewish and Palestinian) solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In addition, the Netherlands provides indirect support for this agenda by outsourcing cooperation (and policy-making) to Dutch aid organizations. Prominent Dutch groups such as ICCO, the Inter-church Organization for Development and Cooperation, IKV Pax Christi, and Oxfam Novib, which receive large-scale funding, are considered to be important partners for the Dutch government in the Middle East. Moreover, ICCO and IKV Pax Christi are church-based organizations, adding a dangerous theological component to their involvement in economic warfare against Israel.

ICCO is an illustrative example – in 2012, ICCO received €81 million, 84 percent of its total budget, from the Dutch government. This makes ICCO a major instrument for outsourcing of Dutch foreign policy, and highlights the contradictions inherent in the long history of support for BDS organizations. For example, ICCO provides funding for CWP (discussed above) and Electronic Intifada (EI), an online media platform dedicated to promoting an extreme anti-Israel agenda, including BDS and highly offensive antisemitic articles that compare Israelis to Nazis. ICCO has been criticized by the Dutch Foreign Ministry and Members of Parliament for its funding of EI, but officials in charge of spending this taxpayer-provided budget have refused to end support for EI and other radical anti-peace organizations.

These activities stand in direct contradiction to Dutch policy goals and principles. ICCO's leadership includes individuals such as Mitri Raheb, a Palestinian pastor who co-authored the Kairos-Palestine document. This document uses religious language to deny the Jewish historical connection to Israel and advocate for "a system of economic sanctions and boycott to be applied against Israel." For an inter-church organization claiming to promote cooperation and development, such incitement and related activities are entirely inexplicable.

These few examples are representative of dozens of cases. Our analysis points to the need for a wide-ranging public debate, including hearings in the European Parliament, to facilitate policies that will end the secrecy with which EIDHR and other frameworks allocate political NGO funding. There is also a need for transparent, independent, and professional evaluation of EU allocations to NGOs, and direct engagement with the Israeli government and Members of Knesset to establish agreed guidelines on the appropriate uses of taxpayer funds in this realm.